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ABSTRACT

The relative credibility of media is measured and compared over a 16-year period by the Roper Organization for the Television Information Office. Sources of information and trends in viewing habits and hours of viewing are described; the relative desirability of media as viewed by various population groups is reported. Changes in opinion as to objectivity of election coverage is cited for Presidential, Congressional and local campaigns. Attitudes towards programing, commercials, children's fare and pay television also are described. An appendix explains how the survey was conducted. (SK)

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trends in public attitudes toward television and other mass media 1959-1971

IR000065

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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PREFACE

No major American institution has escaped challenge in the last decade. And none is guaranteed untroubled passage through the Seventies. So, those who must guide the conduct of our major public and private enterprises find public opinion research an indispensable tool, to learn where they have been, to search for signs of their weakness and strength, and to provide useful insights into public needs and preferences.

For these reasons, the following report and the eight which have preceded it have offered instruction and encouragement, not only to television broadcasters, but to others whose concerns include the newest of the mass information media.

When data were gathered for the previous study in November 1972, journalism--television journalism, particularly--was under attack from many members and supporters of the Nixon administration. It had been Vice-President Agnew who, on national television, launched what many broadcasters came to believe was a full-scale assault on the credibility of broadcast news. They saw it as an attempt to diminish public confidence in the competence and motives of television newsmen.

Other critics, equally sharp, have been heard from all points of the political and social spectrums. They, too, have perceived -- each from his special perspective -- bias, omissions, the under- and over-playing of stories, inaccuracy, inadequate attention to minority and unconventional views.

Serious journalists, no matter which medium they serve, make no pretense of infallibility or perfection. They meet tight deadlines, are

often dependent on secondary news sources and, except in unusual instances, must deal with the realities of a finite "news slot" in newspapers, magazines and broadcast schedules. How their audiences rate the totality of their performances can be found in some measure through studies like this Roper series. Curiously, the findings can be expected to have little impact on the day-to-day efforts of trained professional newsmen, nor should they. For it would be the ultimate disservice to our society if responsibility were to be sacrificed for popularity.

Two years ago the 1972 study revealed that, in the opinion of the nation's viewers, television news remained the most believable of the media; more people turned to it as their first choice for news; and there were no signs of growth in the small minority who wanted government to control television news. A comparison of newspapers, television stations, schools and local government showed the two media to have inched up in public approval.

Now, with Watergate, impeachment, resignation and most of their echoes behind us, the new data, gathered last November, indicate that the attacks on television journalism may, in fact, have had some impact on the 1972 findings. Data in that year had shown a leveling-off of television's upward trend as the most believable mass medium, whereas the current study shows that the relative credibility of television news has reached a new high, now outrunning its closest competition by a five-to-two margin. In addition, there has been a renewed upward swing in the approval of television station performance, a trend shared, in part, by newspapers. The vote against government control of television news has also reached a new peak.

Lessons: Given the support of a people who treasure freedom, broadcast journalism can withstand, certainly for a substantial period, concerted efforts to undermine its foundations. A free press, despite the abrasions it must inevitably cause, does not go unappreciated by its audience.

April, 1975

ROY DANISH, Director
Television Information Office

I

Trends in Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media: A Sixteen-Year Review

By Burns W. Roper

When this series of studies was begun in 1959, television was in a secondary media position. Successive studies have shown television moving almost uninterruptedly upward in terms of public regard and approval of its programming. Television assumed a leading position in 1963, and has steadily increased its lead since. This study, made at the end of 1974, shows levels of approval for television as high as or higher than the previous studies on almost every comparative measure.

What has been the background against which television has shown this progress? The sixties and early seventies have been a time of turbulence, a period which has seen great social changes—in lifestyles, in social mores and customs. It has also been a period during which many institutions have been challenged and criticized, and in which the consumer movement has placed greatly increased demands on the producers of goods and services. Readings we have taken on the American public's attitudes in other studies during this time, and particularly in the last two or three years, show the public increasingly skeptical of leadership and institutions and apprehensive about the future. In fact, the public is at present so cynical about institutions in our

society that it often fails to recognize efforts by those institutions to meet the public's criticisms.

During this period, television has had the problem of keeping up with a changing society, of facing challenges on its programming, on its alleged news bias and on advertising on children's programs. Its increasing regard by the American public indicates that it is successfully meeting its challenges. This is all the more significant in light of the public's lack of recognition of efforts on the part of other institutions. In a period in which opinions about most institutions have become increasingly cynical and negative, an institution which can hold its own is showing progress in a relative sense. Television, however, shows progress in an *absolute* sense.

The current study focused on trend data, repeating questions asked in past studies. The field work was done late in November, 1974 following the elections. Analysis of the results shows television further consolidating its leading position with the American public. Television continues to be regarded as the number one source of news by the public, and by the widest margin we have ever recorded. It has also increased its lead as the most believable medium and as the most desirable medium.

The public is increasingly against government regulation of either TV programming or news. While there is criticism of what is presented on TV, the American public generally approves of what it gets in both programming and commercials. Opposition to commercials on children's programs, which was a minority viewpoint in 1972, is even more in the minority now, presumably reflecting changes made in television in response to criticism in this area.

Source of News

Beginning with the first study in 1959, all questions comparing the various media have been asked before those questions that specifically focus on television, in order to avoid bias.

The first question in each study has asked people where they get most of their news. Television, which has led all other media on this question since 1963, has increased its sizeable lead over the second-place medium to the widest margin ever—18 points (vs. 14 two years ago).

"First, I'd like to ask you where you usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world today--from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where?"

Source of most news:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	51	52	55	58	64	59	60	64	65
Newspapers	57	57	53	56	55	49	48	50	47
Radio	34	34	29	26	28	25	23	21	21
Magazines	8	9	6	8	7	7	5	6	4
People	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4
All Mentions	154	157	147	153	158	145	140	145	142
Don't know/ no answer (DK/NA)	1	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	°

Before 1972, newspapers had led television as the main source of news among the college-educated. In this group, 1972 found the two media almost even, with newspapers ahead by 2 points. This year television was named by 56 percent of the college-educated and newspapers by 55 percent.

Analysis of multiple responses:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
TV only	19	18	23	23	25	29	31	33	36
N'pers only	21	19	21	20	18	19	21	19	19
Both n'pers and TV (with or without other media)	26	27	24	28	30	25	22	26	23
N'pers and other media but not TV	10	11	8	8	7	6	5	5	4
TV and other media but not n'pers	6	7	8	6	8	5	7	5	6
Media other than TV or n'pers	17	15	13	12	10	13	13	12	12
DK/NA	1	3	3	3	2	3	1	°	°

In all studies, when people have named more than one medium, multiple answers have been accepted. Analyses of multiple responses have shown television steadily increasing its lead as the single most-relied-upon medium, with well over one-third now mentioning only television.

The Relative Credibility of Media

Television has led as the most believable news medium since 1961, and in 1968 reached a two-to-one advantage over newspapers. It widened its margin over newspapers in 1971 and has now made further gains, enjoying a two-and-a-half-to-one advantage over newspapers.

"If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe—the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?"

Most believable:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	29	39	36	41	41	44	49	48	51
Newspapers	32	24	24	23	24	21	20	21	20
Radio	12	12	12	8	7	8	10	8	8
Magazines	10	10	10	10	8	11	9	10	8
DK/NA	17	17	18	18	20	16	12	13	13

The Relative Desirability of Media

Television has consistently been named the most desired medium since the series of studies began in 1959. It reached a three-to-one lead over newspapers in 1971 and, after a small improvement for newspapers in 1972, has now moved ahead again to slightly better than a three-to-one lead over newspapers.

"Suppose that you could continue to have only <u>one</u> of the following—radio, television, newspapers or magazines—which one of the four would you <u>most</u> want to <u>keep</u>?"

Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/63* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	42	42	44	49	53	50	58	56	59
Newspapers	32	28	28	27	26	24	19	22	19
Radio	19	22	19	15	14	17	17	16	17
Magazines	4	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	4
DK/NA	3	4	4	4	4	4	1	1	1

Among the college-educated, television has again regained a strong lead over newspapers, after a narrowing of the gap between the two media in 1972.

	College-educated							
Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	27	34	34	39	37	47	44	45
Newspapers	47	37	42	38	36	26	32	26
Radio	15	16	11	13	13	17	15	17
Magazines	9	12	10	8	12	10	8	10
DK/NA	2	1	3	2	2	*	1	2

Among the upper-economic groups—the top 25 percent of the sample in income—television has improved on the two-to-one lead over newspapers it first achieved in 1971.

	Upper-economic levels							
Most want to keep:	*12/59* %	*11/61* %	*11/64* %	*1/67* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	35	42	45	45	45	50	52	54
Newspapers	41	33	34	33	30	24	25	25
Radio	15	17	13	13	15	18	16	14
Magazines	7	6	7	6	6	7	5	5
DK/NA	2	2	1	3	4	1	2	2

Trends in Hours of Viewing

Television viewing has increased steadily since we first asked in 1961 about the amount of time individuals spent viewing television, and has now reached three hours daily.

While answers to this question are subject to respondents' reporting error, the trend results are meaningful, even though the absolute response may be somewhat off the mark.

"On an average day, about how many hours do you personally spend watching TV?"

	11/61	*11/63*	*11/64*	*1/67*	*11/68*	*1/71*	*11/72*	*11/74*
Median hours of viewing	2:17	2:34	2:38	2:41	2:47	2:50	2:50	3:02

Television viewing by the college-educated and upper-income groups, although consistently below the national average, dipped in 1972 after steadily increasing between 1961 and 1971. This year, respondents in both groups reported a marked increase in viewing, to peak levels, with a particularly sharp increase reported by the upper economic groups.

Median hours of viewing by:	*11/61*	*11/64*	*1/67*	*11/68*	*1/71*	*11/72*	*11/74*
College-educated	1:48	2:04	2:10	2:17	2:19	2:12	2:23
Upper-economic levels	2:02	2:14	2:21	2:24	2:30	2:29	2:47

II

Media in Election Years

In the five studies conducted between 1964 and 1972 people were asked after each of the five elections (three Presidential and two mid-term) about their sources of information on candidates running at different levels of government:

> *"During the last election campaign, from what source did you become best acquainted with the candidates for city (town) and county offices—from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where? What about candidates for state offices? And what about the candidates for national offices—the Presidency, the Senate and the House of Representatives?"**

In every year newspapers led television in acquainting people with candidates for local offices. The results for state offices were less clear, although television led newspapers or was even with them in all studies. Television clearly overshadowed newspapers as a source for becoming acquainted with candidates for national office, whether in mid-term or Presidential elections.

* The question about candidates for national offices was not included in the 1967 study. When asked following the mid-term election of 1970, the question read: "And what about candidates for national office—the Senate and the House of Representatives?"

In earlier years there had been some question in our minds as to whether these questions may be imprecise because of inconsistent respondent interpretation of "local" vs. "state" vs. "national." (For example are Congressmen thought of as "local" because they are elected only from their districts, or as "national" because they go to Washington? Are U.S. Senators thought of as "state" or "national"?)

We therefore asked differently worded questions of half of the sample after the 1970 and 1972 elections, using what we felt to be clearer illustrations for the three levels of office.

Since these versions of the questions seemed to provide sharper answers, and in the same direction as the earlier versions, in this study we have used the newer versions of the question only:

"During the last election campaign, from what source did you become best acquainted with the candidates running in local elections—like mayor, members of the state legislature, etc.—from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where?"

Local elections:	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Newspapers	**41**	**41**	**41**
Television	**27**	**31**	**30**
Radio	**6**	**7**	**8**
People	**19**	**23**	**14**
Magazines	**1**	**1**	**1**
Other	**5**	**5**	**5**
Total mentions	**99**	**108**	**99**

In all studies since 1971 (as with the earlier versions of the question) newspapers led television in acquainting people with *local* candidates.

A new question this year asked which of four media gave people the clearest understanding of the local issues in the elections. As with local candidates, newspapers led television. The findings indicate that both leading media are more effective in informing about issues than about candidates, newspapers by a two-point margin and television by a five-point margin. This may be because there are frequently more candidates than issues.

"Thinking of the recent elections in this area, which would you say give you the clearest understanding of the local issues—radio, television, newspapers or magazines?"

Local issues:	*11/74* %
Newspapers	43
Television	35
Radio	10
Magazines	1
Other	4
Total mentions	93

In statewide elections, television continues to show a clear lead over newspapers. Both mid-term elections, 1970 and 1974, show television stronger relative to newspapers than in the 1972 Presidential election. This appears to be characteristic of the two kinds of elections, and may result from television's being able to devote more time to individual candidates on the less-crowded mid-term ballot. Another reading on a Presidential election would illuminate this more clearly.

"What about the candidates running in statewide elections—like U.S. Senator and Governor?"

Statewide elections:	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Television	51	49	48
Newspapers	29	39	33
Radio	6	7	6
People	10	9	6
Magazines	2	1	1
Other	4	3	3
Total mentions	102	108	97

In the Congressional elections, asked about in this study for the first time, television holds a narrow lead over newspapers.

"What about candidates for the United States House of Representatives from this district?"

Congressional elections:	*11/74* %
Television	**40**
Newspapers	**35**
Radio	**6**
People	**8**
Magazines	**1**
Other	**5**
Total mentions	**95**

The three questions in this more explicit form confirm as well as clarify the findings of the versions of the questions used in the past. Newspapers appear to be the most important medium in local elections. Both newspapers and television are important in statewide elections and Congressional elections, television more so than newspapers. And past studies have shown television is dominant in national elections.

III

Media in a Period of Social Change

The past sixteen years have been years not only of social change, but of turmoil. Many institutions of society have been criticized and challenged. A question asked in every study has given an overview of how well newspapers and television are regarded at the local level compared with two other community institutions: schools and government. In this study we asked about two other local institutions as well: churches and police. People were asked separately about each:

> *"In every community, the schools, the newspapers, the television stations, the local government, each has a different job to do. Would you say that the local schools (the ones you are familiar with) are doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job? How about the local (newspapers, etc.)—are they (the one(s) you are familiar with) doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job?"*

Measured on the yardstick of good performance, television stations hold a commanding lead over the three other community institutions included in the question since 1959, and a good lead over churches and police, rated for the first time in this study. Television stations moved from a back-seat position in 1959 to a front position in 1967, and show a marked rise this year over 1972. It is noteworthy that television stations are the *only* one of the four community institutions to have risen in regard since 1959. All three others are down. In the current study, while one out of four rates television's performance as less than good, very few low-rate it as poor—5 percent—which is about the same percentage as rate the performance of churches as poor. All others have a higher "poor" rating, ranging from 17 percent for local governments to 8 percent for local police.

		Percent considering the performance as:		
		Excellent or good %	*Fair or poor* %	*Don't know or no answer* %
Television stations	11/74	71	25	4
	11/72	60	36	4
	1/71	59	36	5
	11/68	57	36	7
	1/67	64	30	6
	11/64	62	28	10
	11/63	60	31	9
	11/61	57	34	9
	12/59	59	32	9
Schools	11/74	50	30	20
	11/72	50	35	15
	1/71	50	37	13
	11/68	58	29	13
	1/67	61	25	14
	11/64	62	22	16
	11/63	61	24	15
	11/61	61	25	14
	12/59	64	26	10
Newspapers	11/74	58	36	6
	11/72	51	43	6
	1/71	48	46	6
	11/68	51	41	8
	1/67	59	34	7
	11/64	55	36	9
	11/63	55	36	9
	11/61	59	32	9
	12/59	64	30	6
Local government	11/72	35	52	12
	11/74	36	53	11
	1/71	34	55	11
	11/68	41	47	12
	1/67	45	42	13
	11/64	47	38	15
	11/63	43	43	14
	11/61	45	42	13
	12/59	44	43	13
Churches	11/74	66	20	15
Police	11/74	65	29	6

Aspects of Opinion on the Air

Since 1971 we have asked questions on how television handles opinion. Consistently, few have criticized television for devoting too much time to opinion programs. Five times as many say they would like more time devoted to opinions as said less time. Nearly half feel there is about the right amount devoted to such material.

"Do you think television devotes too much, too little, or about the right amount of time to having people express their opinions on the air?"

	11/71 %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Too much time to opinion	9	9	8
Too little time to opinion	31	36	39
About the right amount	51	47	45
DK/NA	9	8	8

In the last study we asked two further questions of the entire sample to probe people's views on the balance on television between extreme-and-far-out vs. middle-of-the-road opinions and the balance between to-the-left vs. to-the-right opinions.

Over two-thirds find the balance is right or have no opinion as to whether there is too much extreme or too much conventional opinion. Those who question the balance lean slighty to the view that there is too much extreme opinion.

"In its news programs, discussion shows and interviews, television devotes a certain amount of time to opinions – opinions of community leaders, leaders of organizations, politicians and just average citizens. In presenting opinions, television is supposed to be fair and balanced in showing different points of view. Do you think there is too much extreme and far-out opinion on television, or too much conventional and middle-of-the-road opinion, or about the proper balance between the two?"

	11/72 %	*11/74* %
Too much extreme and far-out	17	17
Too much conventional, middle-of-the-road	15	14
Proper balance	54	58
DK/NA	14	11

As in 1972, four-fifths either think there is a proper balance between right and left, or have no opinion. Among critics, twice as many think there is too much to-the-left opinion as think there is too much to-the-right.

"Do you think that overall the people who are given an opportunity to express their opinions on TV lean too much to the left politically, or too much to the right politically, or that on the whole there is a proper balance between them?"

	11/72 %	11/74 %
Too much to the left	14	13
Too much to the right	6	7
Proper balance	58	58
DK/NA	22	22

Changing Mores

The past decade has seen increasingly open and frank discussion of sexual relations in magazines, books, movies and the theater. Television has faced the problem of examining sex-related subjects while not bringing programs that could be generally considered offensive into the home. Therefore, in this and the previous study a question was included to explore viewer reaction to television's handling of subjects now being more openly discussed. A majority of people think they have been handled well, although there is marginally more criticism now than in 1972. However, a substantial majority of the young and college-educated, who are frequently indicative of future trends, continue to think these subjects have been handled well.

"Now turning to another subject. Things like sex relations, homosexuality and venereal disease are the subjects of many television programs—news programs, documentaries and serious dramatic shows. Do you think such subjects are usually handled responsibly and informatively, or are usually handled sensationally and offensively?"

	Total		18-34 years old		College-educated	
	11/72 %	11/74 %	11/72 %	11/74 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
Responsibly and informatively	57	55	66	68	66	63
Sensationally and offensively	19	21	15	14	14	18
Half and half (volunteered)	12	16	10	14	13	15
DK/NA	12	8	9	4	7	4

The Question of Government Control

Two questions on government control have been asked in previous studies, one on programs in some studies, one on news in other studies. Both were included in the 1971 and 1972 studies, each asked of one-half of the total sample. In this study both were asked of the entire sample, each in the context of the proper sequence of other questions related to *programs* or to *news*.

The question about government control over television *programs* has shown increasing sentiment for *less* controls since 1963. Until four years ago, the most prevalent opinion was that the then existing control was about right. In 1972 there was only a negligible difference between "right amount" and "less." Now, by a significant margin, the prevailing position is that there should be less government control—reflecting, perhaps, a decreased regard for government as well as heightened respect for television. Only a small minority wants more government control over programs.

"There has been some talk recently about the government paying more attention to what kinds of programs are shown on television and being more critical of what should and should not be shown. Some people are in favor of this as a way of ensuring high quality television programming. Others are opposed to it on the grounds that it would result in television programs which the government, but not necessarily the public, would like. How about you—do you think: the government should exercise more control over what programs are on TV, or there is about the right amount of government control of TV programming now, or the government should have less control over what programs are on TV?"

	11/63 %	11/64 %	1/67 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
The government should exercise more control over what programs are on TV	16	19	18	12	17	15
There is about the right amount of government control of TV programming now	43	41	40	48	38	36
The government should have less control over what programs are on TV	27	26	28	31	39	41
DK/NA	14	14	14	9	6	8

Government Control of Television News

On the question of news, an even smaller minority wants more government control of news than wants more control over programming in general. The percentage favoring control of news had shown a fairly sharp rise between 1971 and 1972 among the college-educated, but has decreased in this study. The vast majority in *all* groups is against it, and, for the most part, more so than in 1972.

"There has been some talk recently about the government investigating news programs on television. Some people are in favor of this as a way of insuring that television news programs would be fair, complete and impartial. Others are opposed to it on the grounds that we'd run the danger of having government-managed news. How about you — do you think . . ."

	Total				College-educated			
	11/68 %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
The government *should* have control over TV news programs	11	14	14	12	5	7	13	9
The government should *not* have control over TV news programs	76	80	79	81	92	91	83	88
DK/NA	13	6	7	7	3	2	4	3

	Democrat			*Republican*			*Independent*		
	1/71 %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
The government *should* have control over TV news programs	17	14	13	13	16	15	10	12	9
The government should *not* have control over TV news programs	77	78	80	82	80	78	87	83	88
DK/NA	6	8	7	5	4	7	3	5	3

IV

Attitudes Toward Programs And Commercials

A continuing problem for broadcasters is that of providing the right "mix" of program types to satisfy the many segments of, and the many different tastes within, television's broad audience. Questions have been asked since 1968 to find out public feeling about the balance between major program categories: (1) entertainment vs. news and public affairs, and (2) special interest vs. general interest entertainment programs.

News and Public Affairs vs. Entertainment

All four surveys have shown majority approval of the existing balance. As in 1972, those who would like adjustments lean somewhat more to increased news and public affairs than to more entertainment.

"Magazines and television serve their readers and viewers in different ways. Where a magazine may decide to publish only business news or articles for teenagers or features for housewives, television cannot. It must serve all groups and cater to all interests. This presents the problem of how to have a proper balance of programs and I want to ask you how you feel about program balance.

"First—there is both entertainment programming on TV and news and public affairs programming. How do you personally feel about the balance between news and public affairs versus entertainment—would you like to see more news and public affairs on television, or more entertainment, or do you like the balance that now exists?"

	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
Want more news and public affairs	23	22	23	22
Like existing balance	59	64	58	58
Want more entertainment	11	10	16	16
DK/NA	7	4	3	4

The Cultural/Light Programming Ratio

As compared to the news vs. entertainment question, all four studies have shown somewhat less satisfaction with the balance between "light" and "serious" entertainment programs. But more people continue to express satisfaction with the present balance than want a change. While critical viewers have been more on the side of increased special interest programs than on the side of increased general interest ones, this study shows some narrowing of the gap between preference for the two types.

"There is a certain amount of entertainment programming for people with specialized interests—ballets, classics of literature, serious music and so forth—and there is of course general interest entertainment programming designed for much broader audiences—variety shows, police and detective stories, family comedies and dramas, etc. Would you like to see more of the special interest type of entertainment on television, or more of the general interest type of entertainment, or do you like the balance that now exists?"

	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
Want more special interest	31	30	34	32
Like balance now	41	45	39	39
Want more general interest	21	21	24	25
DK/NA	7	4	3	4

As in previous years, fewer college-educated than less-well-educated like the present balance. However, the percent liking the present balance is up from the last study. As has been consistently shown, the college-educated vote more for special interest than for general inter-

est; the grade-school-educated the reverse; and the high-school-educated are exactly evenly balanced – 29 percent vs. 29 percent.

	Grade school				*College*			
	11/68 %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*11/68* %	*1/71* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Want more special interest	18	16	19	16	59	50	54	50
Like balance now	48	51	48	47	27	36	27	32
Want more general interest	26	26	28	30	11	12	17	15
DK/NA	8	7	5	7	3	2	2	3

Although some small shifts have occurred, the results of these balance questions still leave us with the same three conclusions as in previous years:

(1) Television has not achieved a perfect balance,

(2) However, television has done a good job of staying to the middle of the road; and

(3) "Sweetening" the fare for one minority would seem automatically to "sour" it for an opposing minority.

Attitudes Toward Commercials

As past studies have shown, most people accept commercials as a way of television life, with criticism of them at about the same level as in 1972.

Since 1963 one question has asked respondents to select from four statements (two favorable to commercials and two unfavorable) the one with which they most closely agree. More selected a favorable statement than an unfavorable one, with the balance slightly more on the favorable side in this study than in 1972. The favorable statements total 58 percent vs. 40 percent for the unfavorable statements.

"Which one of these four statements comes closest to describing how you feel about commercials on television?"

	11/63 %	11/64 %	1/67 %	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
I dislike practically all commercials on TV	10	10	11	13	11	14	12
While some of the commercials on TV are all right, most of them are very annoying	29	26	26	25	24	27	28
There are some very annoying commercials on TV, but most of them are perfectly all right	31	35	33	35	38	32	35
The commercials on TV seldom annoy me— in fact, I often enjoy them	24	23	21	22	24	24	23
DK/NA	6	6	9	5	3	3	2

A second question, designed to determine attitudes towards the concept of having commercially-sponsored television, found an even higher percentage than in former years accepting the concept.

"Different people have all sorts of things, both good and bad, to say about TV commercials – for example – that they are in poor taste, that they are informative, that they are amusing, that there are too many of them, etc. Now, everything considered, do you agree or disagree that having commercials on TV is a fair price to pay for being able to watch it?"

	11/63 %	11/64 %	1/67 %	11/68 %	1/71 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
Agree	77	81	80	80	80	81	84
Disagree	14	10	9	10	10	14	12
DK/NA	9	9	11	10	10	5	4

In answer to a question included in both this study and the last, a majority of people, and particularly heavy viewers, say they find that television commercials are helpful to them, at least sometimes.

"Do you find that television commercials are often helpful to you, sometimes helpful, seldom helpful, or never helpful to you?"

	Total		Watches TV on average day: Less than 3 hours		3 up to 5 hours		5 or more hours	
	11/72 %	11/74 %	11/72 %	11/74 %	11/72 %	11/74 %	11/72 %	11/74 %
Often helpful	10	9	8	8	10	9	15	11
Sometimes helpful	43	45	40	40	50	50	47	50
Seldom helpful	28	27	31	31	26	26	22	22
Never helpful	17	17	19	19	13	13	14	16
DK/NA	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1

Commercials on Children's Programs

Because it had been proposed that commercials be completely eliminated from children's programs, questions were included in the last study and again in this one specifically asking about such commercials*. An even smaller minority than in 1972—and a smaller minority of parents of young children—think there should be no commercials. The majority thinks it is all right to have them, by nearly two-and-a-half to one.

"Now I'd like to ask you about commercials on children's television programs—and I mean all kinds of children's programs. Some people think there should be no commercials in any kind of children's programs because they feel children can be too easily influenced. Other people, while perhaps objecting to certain commercials, by and large see no harm in them and think children learn from some of them. How do you feel—

* A different version of a children's television commercial question (one more likely to produce results favorable to television) was asked in 1971, but because the question was different the results are not comparable to those of 1972 and 1974.

that there should be no commercials on any children's programs, or that it is all right to have them?"

	Total sample		People who have children: Under 6 years old only		Both under and over 6 years old		6-16 years old only	
On children's programs:	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Should be no commercials	32	27	39	34	37	31	31	27
All right to have them	60	63	58	65	62	66	64	67
DK/NA	8	10	3	1	1	3	5	6

To test the strength of negative feelings, respondents who answered "no commercials" were asked an additional question in both years. As in 1972, more people who answered "no commercials" would keep the commercials to keep the programs, rather than give up some programs to get rid of the commercials.

"If eliminating commercials on children's TV programs meant considerably reducing the number of children's programs, which would you favor . . ."

	1/71 %	*11/72* %	*11/74* %
Eliminating the commercials and considerably reducing the number of children's programs, or	43	38*	35*
Keeping the commercials to keep the children's programs	47	53	54
DK/NA	10	9	11

* This represents 12% of the total sample in 1972 and 9% of the total sample in 1974.

The conclusions we drew after examining the results of the 1972 study with regard to commercially sponsored television continue to hold valid on the basis of the latest results:

(1) The American public continues to endorse the commercially sponsored system of broadcasting.

(2) While criticism exists, the critics are in the minority.

(3) Even though the minority criticism is sizeable, most of the critics agree with others that having commercials is a fair price to pay for getting their programs.

The Question of Pay Television

In 1963 and 1972, and again in this study, respondents were asked about pay TV, one characteristic of which is, presumably, the absence of commercials. The cost figures used in the 1963 question were used for half the sample in 1972, and higher cost figures reflecting inflation were used in the other half of the sample. Since variation in cost figures caused no difference in answers to the question in 1972, we again raised the cost figures in the question for this study to reflect inflation, but did not feel it necessary to split the sample using 1972 cost figures for trend purposes.

Most people express no interest in subscribing to pay TV. Sentiment for pay TV is down to one in five in the current study, from one in four in 1972—reflecting no doubt both increased satisfaction with television, and increased concern over the cost of living.

"In some places both pay TV and free TV are available for homes. On pay TV you would get to see Broadway shows, the newest movies, championship fights, operas, and other special programs you rarely see now. Of course, you would have to pay to see them—but at less than box office prices. The cost would range from $1.00 to $2.50 each, depending on the programs, or to put it on a monthly basis, anywhere from $20 to $40 or $50 per month, depending upon how many you watched. Would you be interested in subscribing to an additional service like this, or wouldn't you be interested?"

	Lower cost figures		*Higher cost figures*	
	11/63°	*11/72°*	*11/72°*	*11/74*
	%	%	%	%
Interested	16	24	24	20
Not interested	79	72	72	75
DK/NA	5	4	4	5

° Lower cost figures, 1963 and 1972: from $.50 to $1.25 each depending on the programs, or on a monthly basis, anywhere from $10 to $25 or $30 per month, depending on how many programs were watched. Higher cost figures, 1972: from $.75 to $2.00 each, depending on the programs, or on a monthly basis, anywhere from $15 to $35 or $45 per month, depending on how many programs were watched.

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How the Study was Conducted

The Television Information Office indicated the areas or subjects it wished to have covered in this year's study. The Roper Organization assumed full responsibility for the wording of the questions, the study design, and for the analysis of results included in this report.

As in previous surveys, the early questions in the questionnaire dealt with the various media (newspapers, television, magazines, radio). Later the interview focused on television itself. This approach was used so that answers to the earlier questions would not be biased for or against television.

A multistaged, stratified, area probability sample was used, as in the earlier studies. It is a nationwide cross section of the non-institutionalized population 18 years and older living in the continental United States. It is representative of all ages 18 and over, all sizes of community, geographic areas and economic levels. A total of 1995 personal interviews was conducted by experienced, trained interviewers.

The samples since 1971 have included 18-to-20-year-olds because of the lowering of age limits for voting. It was determined through weighting procedures and retabulating that inclusion of this younger group did not affect results in total. This means that trend differences found in the studies are meaningful, and *are* due to changes in attitude of the population as a whole.

The bulk of the field work for this study was conducted in late November and December, 1974.

BURNS W. ROPER, President
The Roper Organization, Inc.

BURNS W. ROPER, president and board chairman of The Roper Organization, Inc. has 29 years of experience in conducting research. His father, the late Elmo Roper, was until his death a director of the firm. The organization conducts custom research studies for a variety of individual clients. In addition, it has a subscription research service, ROPER REPORTS, which monitors public opinion on a range of social, political and economic issues and is subscribed to by government agencies, trade and professional associations, leading firms in American industry and advertising agencies. Included among Roper clients are Philip Morris Incorporated, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Aluminum Company of America, General Mills, Inc. and Standard Oil Company (Indiana).

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THE TELEVISION INFORMATION OFFICE was established in 1959 by the National Association of Broadcasters to serve as a two-way bridge between the television industry and its many publics. The Office provides reference and information services; publicizes programs of special interest; conducts research on public attitudes toward television; and issues publications and audiovisual materials on the structure and operation of the industry. It receives financial support from commercial and educational television stations, the three commercial networks and the National Association of Broadcasters.

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